

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

Page 2

Please replace the paragraph commencing at line 12 with the following amended paragraph:

While new packet switching technologies continue to emerge, service providers must continue to service older technologies as it takes many years for end users to phase out a particular technology. This has led to the service providers maintaining several independent packet switched networks to carry the different types of service. Provisioning and maintaining these multiple networks is costly and it would be advantageous to converge these packet switched networks onto a common network. As shown in Figure 21, Layer-2 and MPLS switches are deployed to aggregate data flows into SONET backbone.

Page 20

Please replace the paragraph commencing at line 12 with the following amended paragraph:

In Figure 7, there exists an optical connection going through nodes C, D, E, G and H. The provider edge nodes D and H include a data enabled optical switch 5 according to the invention such that C and H will use the connection to exchange

control messages. Each control message is encapsulated with a label that both C and H can recognize. Subsequently, C and H will capture and send the control messages to the control plane for processing. One example of an identifiable label is the Explicit NULL label defined in Rosen et. al, "MPLS Label Stack Encoding" , RFC3032, Network Working Group, Request for comments 3032 submitted to Internet Society, January 2001 ~~which may be found at <http://www.ietf.org/rfc/rfc3032.txt>~~. The identifiable label is also called a control message encapsulation label herein and is not limited to the NULL label mentioned above. Indeed, any label could be used as the control message encapsulation label. For example, the provider edge nodes may negotiate any label to serve as the control message encapsulation label and such a label will thereafter identify the data packet as a control message.